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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000632

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

FOR EAP/MTS AND G/TIP

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TAGS: [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [MY](#)
SUBJECT: TIP: GOM INTENSIFIES PUBLIC EDUCATION ON TIP

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 618 -- TIP: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE

Summary

1. (SBU) Summary: In recent weeks, press coverage of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) issues in government-influenced print media has intensified in terms of quality and quantity, another indication of the GOM's determination to be seen as proactively confronting the issue. The shift in the GOM's approach, and the new openness on TIP in the press, was exemplified in a July 28 editorial in the New Straits Times that underlined the significance of the first arrests of Immigration officers and acknowledged that the April SFRC Report and 2009 TIP Report contained "credible" allegations. The Star newspaper followed on August 2 with especially prominent placement of an interview with the Ambassador on the TIP issue. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Comment: Until recently, local mainstream media editors appeared to shy away from publishing in-depth reporting on trafficking, relegating the issue to the crime section or straight news. However, at around the time the Government shifted to a more cooperative and proactive stance in reaction to the June 2009 TIP Report, the media began acknowledging the seriousness of the problem and highlighting the anti-trafficking actions taken by authorities. This approach appears to be part of a major GOM effort to educate the public, as well as its own officials, on the TIP issue. End Comment.

3. (U) In recent weeks the government-influenced print media has significantly increased both the quantity and quality of its reporting on TIP, which previously had been almost a taboo subject. Following the release of the 2009 TIP Report and news of Malaysia's Tier 3 TIP ranking, local press conveyed the Foreign Ministry's statement that Malaysia "takes a serious view of the drop of its status in the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report 2009." In the days and weeks following the June 16 release of the TIP report, the press reflected a shift in the government's public stance on trafficking, as additional government agencies weighed in with their own public statements. An article entitled, "Enforcement Agencies Serious in Combating Human Trafficking," quoted the Inspector General of Police. Other articles quoted the Commissioner of Suhakan, Malaysia's government-sponsored Human Rights Commission, and Home Affairs Minister Hishamuddin Hussein, who said his ministry "gives top priority to human trafficking as (Malaysia) is often used as a transit centre and this cannot continue," and announced creation of a task force involving "all relevant ministries" to study the issues laid out in the 2009 TIP Report. On July 9, 2009, BERNAMA quoted Deputy Home Minister Datuk Wira Abu Seman Yusop at the closing of an ASEAN Awareness Course for Judges and Prosecutors, as saying

"Malaysia will not hesitate to act against human traffickers whether they are government officers or not."

14. (SBU) On July 10, BERNAMA reported two arrests for trafficking in Kuala Lumpur and quoted Deputy Public Prosecutor Mohd Dasuki Mokhtar as saying that he had asked the court to deny bail in these types of cases because the accused were members of a human smuggling and trafficking syndicate, and that because this was a serious case, the court's decision should reflect the government's seriousness in tackling human trafficking (Note: Malaysian officials do not differentiate between human trafficking and human smuggling, although Post continues to highlight the difference in our interactions with TIP and policy-level officials. End note.) The Malay Mail and other local dailies reported a July 9 statement from the Attorney General's Office that more than ten immigration officers were under investigation for involvement in human trafficking. (Note: This was the first public indication that the government had changed its public stance with regard to evidence of official involvement in human trafficking from one of denial and avoidance, to one of acknowledgement and action. End note). Local press subsequently reported on July 20 and 21 that Police had arrested five immigration officials for involvement in an international trafficking syndicate dealing in refugees from Burma.

15. (U) On July 16, BERNAMA reported that Rosmah Mansor, wife of the Malaysian Prime Minister, urged all the First Ladies of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Sharm El Sheikh "to consider serious measures in their respective countries to prevent more innocent women from being caught in the web of

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human traffickers," a clear indication that the Prime Minister's Office had stepped up public diplomacy with regard to trafficking.

16. (U) More recently, on July 26 The Star published three articles in a single issue focused on trafficking. The three pieces exhibited an unprecedented level of honesty and openness, both in terms of their candid reporting, as well as in the evident greater willingness by government officials to discuss trafficking with journalists. One of the Star articles focused on the plight of a single female trafficking victim; the second was an in-depth article discussing a government run shelter for human trafficking victims; and the third was a longer feature article looking at a host of issues related to trafficking, with material drawn from interviews with officials such as Women, Family and Community Development Director-General Noorul Ainu Mohd Nur. The article carried a strong message about the need for greater public education on trafficking, mentioned Ministry efforts to empower local women with information; outlined a proposal to provide multi-lingual pamphlets cautioning foreigners entering Malaysia for work to be aware of the possibility of being trafficked; and mentioned the need for an emergency hotline to assist women who are in danger of being trafficked.

17. (SBU) A June 28 article in the online news portal Malaysiakini entitled "Yes, We have a Human Trafficking Problem" may now be finding its echo within the mainstream media. No stronger evidence of this can be found than in a July 28 New Straits Times Editorial entitled, "Better Late than Never," in which the Editor comments that "the significance of the arrests of the five officers of the Johor Immigration Department cannot be over-emphasized. It not only validates the assertion that the allegations (in the April SFRC Report and 2009 TIP Report) had been 'credible,' but is also a reminder not to easily dismiss claims of official complicity as 'wild' and 'baseless' until a thorough and impartial investigation has been conducted. The fact that the Immigration Officer and three others who have been charged in court to date were accused of trafficking for the purpose of forced labor is no less significant, as there has been a conspicuous absence of such cases in the past. It's

past time that we recognize that men are as much victims as women and that the anti-trafficking law applies to all forms of labor exploitation and not just to forced prostitution."

18. (U) On August 2, The Star gave prominent placement to an interview with the Ambassador on the TIP issue. The paper took the unusual step of publishing the interview in its entirety. The Ambassador noted that while shelters had been built for women and children victims of human trafficking, there remained a need to provide shelters to male victims of labor trafficking. He elaborated that the shelters were important to separate the victims of human trafficking from the perpetrators.

KEITH